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Shotgun Favorite

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BETHANY CARLSON

Shotgun Favorite

You begin with what you know:
raindrops dripping off the curved lips
of your mother's begonias, the dog-eared corners
of paperback favorites,
and the way the backyard smells (faintly
of rotting wood) before sunrise.

Here the dust settles against the sun:
clean homes aren't as charming, you know.
In the kitchen, your sister is whispering faintly
& you see the telephone cord curled against her lips
as she twists it against her body like a favorite
lover. It's ironic, you think, that hearts have no corners.

Days like these begin best with motion & so we turn corners,
the white flash of driveway contrasting with the sun rising:
the color of deep purple hearts. Your favorite
song slices through clean April air as you drive knowing
we'll end up lost, late, apologies dripping off your lips
when the last landmark no longer glows faintly.

About 15 minutes pass until a highway sign faintly
reminds you that you haven't eaten breakfast. At the corner
you think *okay*, push a stale granola bar between your lips
nearly forgetting to chew. You glare at me, at the sunrise
& swear at the ducks crossing in your lane, knowing
your dad loved them (and so do you). Your favorite

pastime was fishing trips in Michigan. You were his shotgun favorite,
the two of you riding around in that battered blue pickup, faintly
lettered ACME Bros. on the driver's side. I know

you say you don't miss that life. But the corners
of his plot are always stamped down with your sunrise
visits. You think this is weakness, won't kiss me on the lips.

On Friday night I slip into a miniskirt & we lip
synch to the Rocky Horror Picture Show at your favorite
diner. *Please talk me through these sunrises,*
you are thinking. We park between faint
lines in the first spot we see. And we are grateful: the corner
grocery will be full of faceless people we do not know.

Sunrises are cruel & gas station cappuccinos burn lips:
knowing this, you can swallow words like *God doesn't have favorites.*
Faint outlines of buildings spread skyward, our hearts without corners.